

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. As Bangladesh prepares for its 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2018, the present joint submission has been prepared on behalf of the UNCT in Bangladesh.<sup>i</sup>
2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of the UPR for Bangladesh took place in April 2013.
3. This submission takes into account the implementation of the recommendations which the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) received during the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of the UPR and suggests the necessary actions to be taken by the GoB.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Scope of International Obligations**

4. Bangladesh is a Party to 8 out of 9 core human rights treaties, namely, the ICERD, ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, CAT, CRC, ICMW, and CRPD. Bangladesh has not acceded to the CPED yet. Bangladesh also Party to 13 out of 19 Universal Instruments against Terrorism.
5. Bangladesh has been engaged in regular reporting under the CEDAW and CRC. Reports under other treaties have been overdue over several years.
6. Bangladesh is due to submit reports under the CAT (due since 1999) and CERD (due since 2002).
7. Despite many recommendations in the previous UPR cycles, Bangladesh remains unwilling to open standing invitation to the Special Procedures.
8. Bangladesh has not signed, or ratified, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Optional Protocol to the ICCPR on abolishing death penalty.
9. Although Bangladesh has not yet ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, it has a long-standing tradition of hosting Rohingyas in the designated camps and also in other makeshift arrangements in Cox's Bazar area.

### **Constitutional and Legislative Framework**

10. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh is the supreme law of the country. Enactment of legislation is the basic function of the Bangladesh Parliament. The Constitution has vested the legislative powers of the Republic to Parliament, subject to the provisions of the Constitution. Executive authorities or statutory bodies cannot make any law. However, they can make by-laws to the extent authorized by the legislature.
11. Parts II and III of the Constitution provide the normative framework of fundamental rights and fundamental principles of State policy. Underpinning these rights and State duties are the principles of rule of law, and equality and non-discrimination based on religion, caste, sex, place of birth, or any of them.

12. Judiciary in Bangladesh has played a pivotal role in advancing the constitutional mandate of protecting and promoting fundamental rights. Since Bangladesh's last UPR in 2013, landmark judgements have enriched the meaning of human rights about gender parity, access to justice, right to health, right to residence, etc.
13. Since Bangladesh's last UPR in 2013, the country has undertaken certain key legislative reforms, particularly in child rights, rights of the persons with disabilities, right to water, rights of older persons, rights against torture and custodial death, etc.

### **Institutional Mechanism**

14. Bangladesh has several institutional mechanisms with the express mandate of protecting and promoting human rights, namely the Public Service Commission, Election Commission, Anti-corruption Commission with constitutional status, National Human Rights Commission and Information Commission with statutory independence, and a legally established law commission.

### **Cooperation with International Human Rights Mechanisms**

15. From 2015 to 2017, Bangladesh submitted State Party's Report under the ICCPR, the CMW, the ICESCR, the CRPD. Bangladesh also submitted the Replies to the List of Issues on CMW and ICCPR and Comments on the ICCPR Concluding Observations.
16. The Special Rapporteurs on food, poverty, water and sanitation, and violence against women visited Bangladesh in 2002, 2009 and 2013, respectively. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and association travelled to Dhaka on an academic (private) visit in September 2014. There have been numerous requests from the Special Rapporteur on minority issues submitted in 2006, 2009, 2010, 2014 and 2017; however, the GoB has not accept the requests. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar visited Bangladesh in February 2017.

### **Implementation of international human rights obligations**

#### **17. Civil Society**

The UNCT remains aware of possible restrictions that the Foreign the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act 2016 (FDA) may impose on the CSO's space. UNCT notices the laxity in protection of Human Rights Defenders (HRD) and slow pace of investigation into blogger killings and death threats to some of the veteran HRDs. The UNCT recommends that the FDA should be amended as per the UNCT's proposals that had been placed before the GoB's consideration during the period of drafting the law.

#### **18. Corruption**

Bangladesh is a Party to the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). In this context, the UNCT recommends that

- Witness and whistleblower protection law should be enacted;

- Capacity of the officers of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) should be enhanced,
- A baseline capacity assessment should be conducted as a starting point for planning the further training actions, and
- Analyze the policies, procedures and capacities of ACC with a view to develop a detailed plan in building the capacity within the institution.

## **19. Death Penalty**

The UNCT recommends abolishing death penalty.

## **20. Detention**

The UNCT is aware of the prisons and detention centres' condition and the case management issues. Thus, UNCT recommends:

- To take necessary actions to expedite disposal of the cases, avoid prolong custody pending trial, provide vocational training for inmates, and provide compensation to persons who are found to be innocent and had been languishing in prisons;
- To ensure proper sanitation, drinking water, clean food, separate cells for juvenile offenders and an overall clean environment;
- To allow local CSOs to undertake visits inside the prisons and centres;
- To implement the UN Minimum Standard Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners-known as the Nelson Mandela Rules; and
- To undertake reforms to strengthen security and prevent violent extremism and radicalization to violence.

## **21. Development**

The UNCT recommends that the GoB should:

- Pay special attention to address different pockets (gender, ethnicity, region, etc.) during the planning of inclusive social safety net programme;
- Ensure transparency and maximum benefit of the target group, for the steps required to transfer cash directly to them through Bangladesh Bank;
- The programmes of the vulnerable groups must be participatory where their voice must be heard and considered.

## **22. Disabilities**

The UNCT recommends that the GoB should fully implement the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities and Protection Act 2013 and adopt a timebound national action plan with adequate budget allocation.

## **23. ESC Rights**

The UNCT is aware of the legal and policy barriers existing in HIV response due to punitive and discriminatory legal environment. Amendment of laws and policies is necessary to ensure positive social and medico-legal environments. Though hijras were

recognized as the third gender, it still needs to translate into other policies and reflect at the implementation level. Specific needs and rights of marginalized women are yet to be reflected in the National Social Security Strategy. All key populations, including sex workers and hijras, face high level of sexual and gender-based violence. Brothel evictions force sex workers to live in dismal conditions without food and shelter; they also lose valuable belongings and face more severe violence. The event pushed human rights and HIV prevention interventions several steps backwards and could instigate similar actions in other existing brothels in the country. Marginalization, social exclusion and criminalization of key populations lead to wide-spread stigma and discrimination and the addressing interventions are inadequate.

#### **24. Freedom of Opinion and Expression**

Constitutionally protected freedom of expression is one of the fundamental rights in Bangladesh. Article 39 of the Constitution ensures this right 'subject to reasonable restriction imposed by law'. However, Section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act-2006 goes against people's right to freedom of expression and free speech. Radical Islamist groups have claimed the killings of at least six bloggers, free thinkers, and their publishers since February 2015, and recently, the attacks are targeting civil society actors, academics, and religious figures with diverse views. In these situation, the UNCT recommends monitoring the enforcement of Right to Information Act (RTI), to adopt a Plan of Action for the implementation of RTI and to consider repealing Section 57 of the ICT Act.

#### **25. Freedom of Religion and Belief**

While Islam is the state religion, the constitution states that the country is a secular one, and religious communities or denominations have the right to establish, maintain, and manage their religious institutions. A Supreme Court Appellate Division ruling allows the use of fatwas only to settle religious matters; fatwas may not be invoked to justify meting out punishment, nor they may supersede the existing secular law. According to media reports, minority groups, especially Hindus, were victims of attacks and looting of religious sites and private homes, particularly in the period surrounding the January national election. UNCT recommends all the probe reports regarding attacks on religious minorities should be published, perpetrators should be brought into the book and ongoing trials should be expedited.

#### **26. HIV AIDS**

The GoB's family planning services mainly cater married couples, making it difficult for young, unmarried adolescents and others to access those services. This needs to be extended to all adolescents irrespective of their marital status. Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) services are currently available in tertiary level medical facilities only which needs to be scaled up to a district level on a priority basis. Also, there is a need for more concerted prevention efforts among the general population, with specific focus on young men. Uptake of HIV prevention and other health services by key populations is still poor, which requires services to be scaled up and made accessible to hard-to-reach groups of key populations.

Overseas migrant workers need more information and support in the prevention of HIV and other diseases, prior to leaving the country and on return. Health insurance and social safety nets need to have due provisions for people living with HIV in terms of nutrition support, treatment, education for orphaned and vulnerable children (affected by AIDS) etc.

## **27. Human Rights Defenders**

CSOs working on LGBT issues often find it difficult to expose them publicly due to threats from religious extremists and recent killing of a few LGBT activists. Specific measures need to be taken to ensure their free and full operation. A Human Rights Defenders forum under the patronage of the NHRC should be established. The GoB should consider adoption of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders as binding national legislation.

## **28. Human Rights Education and Training**

The UNCT urges that the GoB should mainstream human rights-based approach into every national programmatic activity. The GOB should also incorporate basic concepts of human rights into the school textbooks.

## **29. Indigenous peoples**

The UNCT recommends that the GOB needs to:

- Develop a timebound action plan for the full implementation of the CHT accord and ensure its early enforcement;
- To shift from cultural diversity to cultural pluralism, initiate inter-cultural dialogue and education to ensure harmonious interaction and mutual respect among the diverse communities;
- Ensure legal and constitutional protection of the indigenous and religious minorities.

## **30. International Instruments**

The UNCT recommends that the GoB should:

- make a clear commitment with specific timeline and procedure for the consideration of the ratification of the CPED and OP-CAT. The GOB should also make a clear commitment on withdrawal of reservations from different treaty provisions;
- adopt clear strategies to incorporate international obligations (conventions which Bangladesh has ratified) into the national laws;
- accept pending requests for visits from Special Procedures, and issue standing invitations;
- adopt a plan of action to ensure inter-ministerial coordination to implement the commitments stated under the UPR review and Treaty Review;
- ratify the Protocols supplement to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC);
- ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention.

### 31. Justice

Enforcement of Fundamental Rights under Article 102 of the Constitution, the National Human Rights Commission, the Women and Child Repression Prevention Tribunal and the Acid Violation Prevention Tribunal 2013 are among the key forums and avenues of redress available to victims of human rights violations. Unfortunately, not all victims of human rights violation are able to access these forums. Lack of awareness, poverty, fear of reprisals and physical barriers has had an overall negative impact on access to Justice and other redress forums. Despite the efforts made by the National Legal Aid Services Organization (NLASO) and many civil society organizations, the number of people received legal aid services across the country is not exemplary. In total, 2, 52, 267 beneficiaries received Government Legal Aid service till July 2017 (see **Annex 1** for details). Moreover, there is no mechanism to identify how many people receive legal aid in both State and CSO's intervention in a year.

On the other hand, Bangladesh Judiciary is overloaded with a huge number of case backlog which is increasing day by day. End of 2016, a total of 3.15 million cases were pending in courts across the country which is 4% more than 2014. Overall case disposal rate is decreased by 3% in 2016, compare to 2015.<sup>ii</sup>. One of the major causes for slow disposal of cases is nonattendance of witnesses. In this context, the UNCT recommends that:

- The GoB should take ownership and build awareness at grassroot level about Legal Aid as people at very grassroot level and remote area are not aware of the existing free legal services for poor and vulnerable people;
- There are only 17 Legal Aid officials deployed by the Government in 17 districts. The GoB should deploy legal aid officials in 64 districts to ensure better legal aid services accessed by people;
- Labour Court Cells should be capacitated, including budget allocation and staff by the Government. Meanwhile, 2 Labour Courts (Dhaka and Chittagong) are provided support with the intervention of UNDP supported Project but the Government should take ownership to enhance the rest of the Labour Courts for better access;
- The legal aid officials are deployed from the Judiciary but Government should take initiative to create a separate cadre as legal aid officials as there are shortage of Judicial officials in the country;
- Government-NGO coordination should be enhanced and the Government should take more initiatives to strengthen the Legal Aid service, in coordination with NGOs.
- GoB should enact a 'Witness Protection Act' and a 'witness management policy' for sub ordinate courts and tribunals as soon as possible to ensure security and encourage both private and public witness to assist court in time;
- Relevant rules and orders are needed to be updated for possible inclusion of digital recording, documentation and modern case management tools and techniques following many good practices already set up but different courts in the region;
- Updating key legislation of Bangladesh including CrPC, CPC and Evidence Act following the recommendations made by the Law commission is also necessary.

### **32. Labor Rights**

In the context as described in **Annex 2**, the UNCT recommends that the GoB should:

- Ensure that the Bangladesh Labour Act, Bangladesh Labour Rules and draft EPZ Labour Act are in conformity with the provisions of the ILO Convention regarding freedom of association, particularly in bringing down the membership requirement percentage to form a trade union from 30% to some 10%;
- Investigate all alleged acts of anti-union discrimination and ensure that the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Unfair Labour Practices, which were adopted in July 2017, are widely understood and applied;
- Ensure that the new Standard Operating Procedures for the processing of trade union registration applications are effectively operationalized;
- Upgrade the Department of Labour (DoL) with adequate staff and resources;
- Complete the outstanding recruitment of labour inspectors;
- Effectively follow up inspections and remediation in all the country's active export-oriented RMG factories, including their subcontracting factories;
- Inspect RMG factories, which have yet to undergo inspection for structural, fire and electrical safety; and
- Continue the formation of Safety Committees in the industrial set up and ensure they function effectively.

### **33. Migrants**

Despite a comprehensive legal and administrative structures in place, lack of adequate resources has impaired the state efforts to cope with the needs of increasing number of migrant workers. Overseas migrant workers need stronger support from the GoB when the workers are in an emergency (health, social, legal, etc.) situations while abroad. A digital tracing system should be developed for returnee migrants. Undocumented and irregular Bangladeshi migrants living overseas are often subjected to harassments and face human rights violations. Irregularities connected with the work permits and visas are among the key reasons for persons being detained. Use of non-working visa for work has become a common trend and visa checking before migration is possible only for four countries through online. There is no data source to verify exactly how many migrant workers are currently under detention. The rights of migrant workers, particularly women, who are working as domestic help abroad and often find themselves in situations where their rights are violated.

### **34. Minorities**

The Ministry of Education has developed and distributed the pre-primary level books in five ethnic languages in 2017. The Land Commission in the CHT has not been in full operation. New demands are raised to establish another Land Commission for the plain land ethnic groups. The GoB should take initiative to implement the CHT Accord in full.

Human rights of sex workers and LGBT communities need to be ensured with flexible requirements for the better welfare. The GoB should consider employing or engaging (elderly) sex workers and sexual minorities in various activities or positions. Acknowledge existence of sexual and gender minorities, incorporate the issue in relevant policies and

de-criminalize consensual adult same-sex activities by abolishing section 377 of the Penal Code.

In November 2013, a policy decision, approved by the Cabinet, recognized hijras as a separate or third gender. However, the term Hijra was not defined in the Cabinet's decision.

### **35. National Human Rights Institution**

The UNCT recommends to:

- Build capacity of the NHRC so that it could abide by the GANHRI observation and comply with the Paris Principles;
- Amend the founding act to comply the Paris Principles;
- NHRC should be given full powers to investigate human rights violations by law enforcing agencies; and
- The GOB to have Ombudsman in different sectors such as education, health, local government, disadvantaged communities, etc.
- The thematic committees of NHRC<sup>iii</sup> should be strengthened through adequate resource allocation.

### **36. Public Security**

The GoB should take coordinated efforts to counter illicit trafficking of drugs, goods, wildlife and forest products, including human trafficking, and to build capacity of the relevant Government agencies and drug law enforcement officials to counter drug trafficking. Also, the GoB should impart activities to counter terrorism through strengthened capacity of key justice sector actors (investigators, prosecutors and judges) with counter terrorism responsibilities to more effectively investigate, prosecute and adjudicate crimes related to terrorism. The UNCT also recommends the GoB to maintain human rights standards while encountering terrorism and to implement the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, 2006.

### **37. Racial Discrimination**

The GoB should submit its periodic State Party Report under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which has been due since 2002.

### **38. Refugees**

The UNCT commends the position of the GoB on keeping its border open to receive the refugees. Under the current circumstances as described in the **Annex 3**, the UNCT recommends that:

- A threat of detention under the Foreigner's Act, 1946 for illegal entry into Bangladesh is lifted;
- Refugees have access to justice without being threatened to be arrested under any law;

- Protection safety nets for the vulnerable refugees, including women and children, are strengthened making the maximum use and support of the international as well as local capacities;
- Capacity of the service providers on clinical management of rape (CMR), EmONC services and deployment of midwives for providing midwifery-led-care services are enhanced; and
- Human rights based approaches in all support system coordinated or operated by the GoB are mainstreamed and right to movement, marriage, employment etc. of the registered and unregistered Rohingyas are protected.

### **39. Right to Education**

Education is not defined as a ‘right’ in the Bangladesh Constitution and Law of Bangladesh and no provision is made on legal duration of free and compulsory education. The UNCT recommends that GoB should:

- Enact the Integrated Education Act, including free and compulsory education at least up to 13 years of age; and
- Ratify the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960).

### **40. Right to Food**

Right to food is not considered as fundamental right but enshrined as a fundamental principle of state policy in Article 15 of the Bangladesh Constitution, and the right to safe food has been read into the right to life, guaranteed under Article 32, by the Supreme Court. A continued action for formulating a comprehensive legal framework securing the right to food is ongoing. The UNCT recommends that the GoB should take concrete action to improve availability of safe food in domestic markets and implement the Food Safety Act (2013) to make provisions for the establishment of an efficient, effective, and scientifically based Authority. Improving food security and public health through strengthening of veterinary services, production of a safer food, and improved control of animal diseases are needed as well.

### **41. Right to Health**

Bangladesh has reduced maternal death by 60% in the last two decades. Maternal mortality ratio (MMR) declined from 574 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 170 in 2013. However, neonatal mortality rate remains high at 37 per 1000<sup>iv</sup>, and there is an increasing gap in morbidity and mortality rates between the rich and the poor. Bangladesh has several government-endorsed guidelines<sup>v</sup> that address maternal and newborn health issues. However, they need proper implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The UNCT recommends full functionality of the committees and groups<sup>vi</sup>. The UNCT also urges the GoB to address the following challenges:

- In rural and district level facilities, most of the doctors maintain private practices in the afternoon and in the evening. Nurses, and even midwives, are limited by their capacities to perform, as well as by regulations and common beliefs about their limited roles. For this reason, very limited services are offered;

- The skill and capacity levels for handling obstetric and newborn emergencies remain low though most health facilities from Upazila Health Complex and above are well staffed;
- Sub-district hospitals are not set up for initial stabilization of emergencies when referral is needed. In order to give treatment, it is mandated that patients must be admitted, and most emergency staff are not confident or competent in handling obstetric emergencies. These realities lend themselves to the sickest women being referred without treatment, and many die in transit to higher-level facilities, which are often centred in the capital, Dhaka;
- There is a lack of priority to basic accepted practices such as ensuring sterile instruments in some facilities;
- Undertaking specific actions, including 24-hour access and availability of services, to reduce maternal mortality rate and infant mortality rate; and
- Engaging stakeholders in designing health related policies and programmes.

#### **42. Right to Housing**

In recent times, there has been a series of arson in many slums<sup>vii</sup>, which ultimately evacuated thousands of slum dwellers compelling them to live even in more devastating situation. In this context, the UNCT urges the GoB to consider providing shelter or to rehabilitate the slum dwellers before eviction.

#### **43. Rights of the Child**

The recent enactment of the Child Marriage Restraint Act raised concerns among the human rights activists. Both the CRC and CEDAW recommendations to GoB have pointed out that a strong law against child marriage, with no exceptions, is important to prevent the rights of any girls being violated. There are concerns that the inclusion of a clause in the recently enact CM Restraint Act that allows for under age marriage to take place with court consent under special circumstances creates a potential situation of misuse of the law.

The UNCT is aware of violence against children. According to the 2016 Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF) Report, 20 children were killed, 30 raped every month, 3,589 children were victims of violence in 2016, out of whom 1,441 were victims of unnatural deaths and 686 of sexual violence and harassment.

According to 2016 UNICEF study (Ending child marriage – progress and prospects) 52% of girls married before the age of 18. Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) reported that 235 children were raped and 158 children were murdered in 2015. The Daily Prothom Alo reported that more than 300 children were raped in 2016 and 64 children were murdered by their own parents. These trend is continuing to be a grave concern, including high prevalence of child marriage.

A significant percentage of the recent Rohingya population who are fleeing to Bangladesh is children, and ensuring their rights is a challenge. Thus, the UNCT recommends that GoB should

- develop stringent Rules on the CM Restraint Act to prevent any misuse of the law, and that, at the earliest opportunity, such exceptions mentioned in law are removed.
- specify the process and timeline of the appointment of the Ombudsperson for Children.

#### **44. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

If the GoB is not willing at all to repeal article 377 of the Criminal Code in short/medium term, some alternative mechanisms to be identified and put in place for the protection of the LGBT populations.

#### **45. Torture and other CID Treatment**

The UNCT recommends that the GOB should:

- Acknowledge the incidents of extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances and should give timebound commitment to bring legal reforms to address these human rights violations;
- Make a commitment by specifying the process of establishing an independent commission to ensure transparent and accountable investigation and prosecution of alleged human rights violations by state agencies, and reparations for victims;
- Take actions to end custodial torture and other human rights abuses of prisoners and detainees; and also to promote prison reforms, including systematic monitoring of prisons;
- Commit to a specific timeline to repeal the Special Powers Act, and reform other relevant laws;

#### **46. Trafficking**

The GoB has taken number of initiatives to combat trafficking. The GoB enacted the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Rules in 2016 under the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act (2012). The rules clarify and elaborate the implementation of the law with definition, investigation, prosecution and conviction. Subsequently, the GoB has prepared the National Plan of Action 2015- 2017 to combat human trafficking, and intensified the role of the district and local level Government officials and institutions through activating the District and Sub District Anti-Human Trafficking Committee. The GoB has established Women and Children Suppression Tribunal and engaged public prosecutors in all districts to provide law supports to the victims of human trafficking particularly the women and children. It is also planning to establish 7 special tribunals in seven divisional (administrative) city in order to ensure speedy trial. The GoB has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Government of India for easy rescue and repatriation of victims of human trafficking. The border forces of the both governments were mobilized to act upon the cross-border trafficking and easy repatriation under the amenities of the MOU. A proposal has been raised to include Nepal in the process as well. An action plan spanning over 2015-2017 is also in place. Bearing those in mind, UNCT recommends:

- Full implementation of those instruments and initiatives;

- Law enforcement agencies, judiciary and foreign missions need to be orientated about the trafficking law;
- Budgetary allocation for full functionality of the Tribunals; and
- Develop a victim and witness protection regime.

#### **47. Treaty Bodies**

The UNCT recommends that Bangladesh should ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and OP-CAT and submit report under the CAT, the CERD and other Conventions as required.

#### **48. UPR Process**

The GoB should involve CSOs into the preparation of the State's submission and share the report with stakeholders prior to its submission to incorporate their observations.

#### **49. Women Rights**

On the backdrop, as described in **Annex 4**, the UNCT recommends the following:

- The Action Plan for the National Women Development Policy 2011 (NWDP) needs to put more emphasis on prevention of GBV, policy and legal reform on issues such as inheritance and property rights to achieve SDGs, the 7<sup>th</sup> FYP's gender equality targets and substantial resource allocation;
- Specific indicator to monitor the prevalence of GBV is included in the result and resource framework (RRF) of the 7th Five Year Plan;
- Implement NWDP with an emphasis to improve women's condition and remove gender stereotypes that limit opportunities for women and girls. Promote girl's participation in public activities including competitive sports/cultural activities and women's participation in the economy, and widely disseminate their achievements for greater awareness;
- Strengthen National Women Machinery (NWM) for the implementation NWDP, SDGs and 7<sup>th</sup> FYP. Provide more authority, financial allocation and human resource to NWM for effective gender mainstreaming across ministries and divisions;
- Update the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 (Amended in 2003) following the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial Conference's recommendations and High Court directives;
- Enact Rules under the aforesaid Act which is due since 2000;
- Enact Rules under the Child Marriage Restraints Act 2017;
- Amend relevant sections of Criminal Procedure Code, 1898 to protect women's human rights;

- Establish separate tribunals for women in all districts and create women friendly environment there. Build capacity of judicial actors on gender sensitive trial process;
- Enact the “Anti-Discrimination Law”, in compliance with the CEDAW within a specific time frame;
- Devise a roadmap outlining when and how the GoB will review and amend discriminatory laws, personal laws, eradicate traditional practices hindering to ensure gender equality;
- Establish more victim support centers and one-stop crisis centers are needed to address GBV at the grassroots;
- Take steps to strengthen temporary special measures such as quota system to ensure equal representation of men and women in sectors where women are under-represented;
- Encourage policy measures to provide second chance/re-entry opportunity to girls and women who are out of education/school. Ensure scope for women and girls to pursue non-traditional fields of study and career paths for livelihood opportunities;
- Take steps to address the persistent wage gap between women and men, including closing the gender wage gap in public and private sectors. Monitor and take initiatives to ensure violence free working environment and address obstacles that deter women joining in the economy. Address the growing informality of work and encourage more women through positive measures to join in the formal economy;
- Enact a law to ensure safety for women and girls in public spaces, particularly emphasizing women’s and girls’ safety in transport, and work on changing adverse social norms that restrict women’s mobility. Enact a comprehensive law and take immediate measures, including temporary special measures, to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls from vulnerable groups and protect them from all forms of discrimination, gender based violence and abuse per CEDAW concluding observation;
- Review the National Action Plan (NAP) for 2013-2025 on Violence Against Women (VAW) through a participatory approach to prevent and respond to VAW in Bangladesh and include a logical chain of interventions that contribute to positive changes;
- Develop a clear results framework, monitoring indicators, targets, and means of verification with cost estimation for the first five years of implementing the NAP;
- Develop guidelines for the establishment and management of a multi-sectoral referral system engaging health, social, police and legal sectors to prevent and response on GBV;
- Withdraw reservations on Article 2 and Article 16.1(c) of the CEDAW.

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<sup>i</sup> UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, FAO, UNICEF, UN Women, UNAIDS, UNODC, IOM, UNHCR, ILO

<sup>ii</sup> Annual Case Statistics Report, Supreme Court

<sup>iii</sup> Committee on Dalits, Hijra and other excluded minorities, on Women, for protection of religious and Ethnic Minorities and Non-citizen's rights, on persons with disabilities and autism, consist of civil society organizations, human rights activist, state institutions, academician, development agencies and intergovernmental agencies.

<sup>iv</sup> Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2013 Estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, The World Bank and the United Nations Population Division

<sup>v</sup> These include the Bangladesh National Maternal Health Strategy 2015-2030, the MOH Maternal and Newborn Health Standard Operating Procedures, the Bangladesh Essential Service Package, and the Bangladesh 4th Health Sector Plan.

<sup>vi</sup> National Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (EmONC) committee and the sub working group

<sup>vii</sup> for instance, on 24 January 2017, a hovel owned by an elderly woman of extreme poverty was torched inside Hatirjheel, a place that is managed by national security forces; on 22 January 2017, the slum in Kalyanpur area has allegedly been set on fire by some people, a day after the Housing and Building Research Institute officials conducted eviction drive<sup>viii</sup>; on 3 January 2017, a devastating fire has not only consumed hundreds of shops at the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Market (Gulshan), but also caused the collapse of parts of the main building. There has been a legal battle going between the business owners and City Corporation; on 4 December 2016, a fire broke out in the Korail slum and displaced over 500 families. It was the 6<sup>th</sup> fire in the same slum over the last 4 years; on 6 November 2016, a section of Bangladeshi cops was seen in setting fire to houses of Santals at remote villages of Gobindaganj in Gaibandha. Thousands of Santals lost movables, forced to flee the villages; on 5 October 2016, hundreds of shanties were gutted in a fire at Hazaribagh's Boubazar slum in Dhaka. In this context, as shelter is one of the basic needs for human survival.